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produce of their fields, but all this is, he says, offered to Aimu, the chief of the evil spirits.

The blood is poured out as a propitiation to the demon, while the flesh furnishes a feast for the old men. While this feast is going on, the women engage in an indecent dance, which is continued until many go into convulsions, and have to be carried away.

There are several features in this sacrifice which furnish parallels to Semitic sacrifices. 1. The propitiation of the demon Aimu with the blood of a goat, although it is accomplished in a different way, reminds one of the goat with which Azazel was propitiated in the ritual of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus xvi. 2. The festal character of the sacrifice is parallel to the festal character of all ancient Semitic sacrifice, as W. R. Smith has shown us in the "Religion of the Semites." 3. That the old Semitic sacrificial feasts were accompanied with dancing, which were in the early times religious, but which tended to assume an orgiastic character, and become a sort of intoxication of the senses, Smith has also shown. (*Op. cit.* 260-262, and 430-433.)

Such rites in some form are, it would seem, characteristic of most religions at an early stage of development.<sup>1</sup>

George A. Barton.

BRYN MAWR, PA.

TWO NEGRO WITCH-STORIES. — I. The following story of witchcraft was told by a mulatto or quadroon stewardess of Baltimore, on a steamer sailing from Boston to Baltimore. The stewardess had learned the particulars of her mother, who, with the mother's half-brother, the hero of the story, lived in Salisbury, Md.

Every night a black cat came and rode on the man's chest. He was told that it was not really a cat but a witch, and was advised to set a trap for it in the usual way, that is, by thrusting a fork through a sieve, so that the tines would project inside of it.

This he did, placing the sieve close beside him. The cat, in attempting to leap on his chest as usual, was impaled on the fork, and unable to get off.

Next morning it was found that the next-door neighbor, a woman, was sick abed with a "misery in her breast," the location of the pain corresponding exactly to the wounded place on the chest of the cat. This neighbor died of the injury within a week.

II. The same woman related the following: Her mother, when a girl, lived in Salisbury, Md., in service with two reputable and well-to-do old maiden ladies. She noticed that one of these old ladies was frequently in the habit of going out at 10 P. M. or later, and remaining out very late, — perhaps all night. She told her mother of this, saying she thought there was something queer about the old ladies, and the mother suggested that possibly they were witches.

One night the old ladies asked the colored girl to have her mother come

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, pp. 180-182.

to stay with her, as they were both to go away that night. The mother came, bringing a companion with her. As the evening wore on, the old ladies sent the colored girls and the mother to bed, saying that they themselves would lock up the house. Then the ladies went to their chamber, ostensibly to dress. The negroes, suspecting something, watched them through a keyhole, and saw them go to the hearth in their chamber, and there slip out of their human skins, appearing as two black cats, which then scrambled up the chimney.

One of the delighted witnesses of the transformation thereupon suggested putting salt and pepper on the empty skins that lay on the hearth-rug, and this was quickly done. Afraid to stay to watch the consequences, they ran from the house, telling the neighbors to watch in the morning, and see what would happen. The neighbors were on hand at an early hour, and, on peeping through the shutters, saw first one, then the other of the black cats crawl back into the human skin that belonged to it, then leap out in an agony of smarting, and so in and out, in and out, for a long time.

The peals of laughter with which the stewardess told this story, and her genuine enthusiasm over the stratagem just narrated, as well as incidental remarks which she made in regard to the existence of witches at the present day, showed undoubting faith in their reality.

LOUISIANA GHOST STORY. — Told in August, 1889, by a negro man of forty-five or thereabouts, employed as dairy-hand at Chestertown, Md. He had come from Louisiana, where he had been a slave.

"About two years ago, I reckon, an ole man died in the place whar I useter live. He lef' a heap o' proputties ter his heirs; the' was a right smart head o' chillun, an' he give 'em ev'y one a farm, an' the' was one mo' farm yit lef' over. 'T was a good farm an' the house all furnished up, but no one did n' keer ter live thar, fer they all said the house was haanted.

"But one o' the heirs he said he wan't no way feared but he could lay that ghost ef they 'd give him the farm, 'n' they tole him the farm was his ef he could lay the ghost so 's ter live thar. So he went ter a man o' the name o' Peacock that lived neighbor ter him, an' 't was a church-member, an' offered him a heap o' money ter go an' lay that ghost.

"Mr. Peacock, he went that same night ter the house, takin' his Bible along, 'n' he set thar a-readin' it backward and forward; he did n' mind it none whether the ghost came a-nigh or not.<sup>1</sup> Sho' nuff, the ghost came along while he was a-readin', an' it went all about thro' the house, so 's Mr. Peacock could hear it goin' inter the diffunt rooms an' a-movin' things this-a-way an' that-a-way. But he did n' let on to hear the ghost, — no indeed, — but he kep' a-readin' away ter his Bible.

"Arter a while the ghost blowed out his lamp, but he jes' lighted it an' read on, 'n' then he went inter the bedroom an' lay down. That sort o' made the ghost mad, so 's it come inter the bedroom an' he see it, like as

<sup>1</sup> Reading the Bible backward is supposed to keep ghosts from entering; reading it forward, to prevent them (if already in the house) from harming one.